



AN INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC TO DELIGHT ALL THE SAGES, THE MEDICAL HISTORY OF DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU CHÖKYI WANGCHUK (1775-1837)¹

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On the auspicious occasion of their 50th anniversary celebration, the Dharamsala Men-tsee-khang published a previously unavailable manuscript entitled *A Briefly Stated Framework of Instructions for the Glorious Field of Medicine: Music to Delight All the Sages*.² Part of the genre associated with polemics on the origin and development of medicine (*khog 'bubs* or *khog 'bugs*), this text – hereafter referred to as *Music to Delight All the Sages* – was written between 1816-17 in Kyirong by Drakkar Taso Trulku Chökyi Wangchuk (1775-1837).³ Since available medical history texts are rare, this one represents a new source of great interest documenting the dynamism of Tibetan medicine between the 18th and early 19th centuries, a lesser-known period in the history of medicine in Tibet. *Music to Delight All the Sages* presents a historical argument concerned with reconciling the author's various received medical lineages and traditions. Some

- 1 This article is drawn from a more extensive treatment of this and related 18th and 19th century medical histories in my forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Tashi Tsering of the Amnye Machen Institute for sharing a copy of the handwritten manuscript of *Music to Delight All the Sages* with me and for his encouragement and assistance of this work over its duration. This publication was made possible by support from the Social Science Research Council's International Dissertation Research Fellowship, with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
- 2 *Dpal ldan gso ba rig pa'i man ngag gi khog 'bubs [phub] bsdus don nyung ngu'i ngag gi gtam du bya ba drang srong kun tu dgyes pa'i rol mo* (Brag dkar ba 2012). The extant manuscript, written in short-form “headless-letter” calligraphy (*tshugs thung dbu med*), appears to be complete in 67 double-sided folios. N.B. Although the original manuscript reads *khog phub*, the Men-Tsee-Khang book edition has rendered this with the more common spelling *khog 'bubs*. Yangga (2010) has translated *khog 'bubs* as “pitching (building) a framework,” while Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1970 and Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010) analyses his variant spelling *khog 'bugs* as “piercing the interior,” leading Schaeffer (2003) to render the term as “interior analysis.” Brag dkar rta so sprul sku does not elaborate on his choice of spelling; he does, however, perpetuate the difference in spelling between his own title and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's work within this manuscript.
- 3 This article follows the Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL) system of phonetic transcription for Tibetan terms. For their equivalencies in Wylie transliteration, see Glossary.





of these had been at odds in the past, both hermeneutically and politically. In particular, Drakkar Taso Trulku (or Drakkarwa) foregrounds the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* (*Bdud rtsi bum pa che chung*), a set of revelatory medical “treasure” texts (*gter*) associated with both his home region of Kyirong and the Jang treasure tradition (*Byang gter*). Drakkarwa’s account draws attention to the prominence of these cycles – the medical treasures and their supplementary texts – between the 16th-19th centuries. Through his own medical activities and writings, Drakkar Taso Trulku seeks to propagate the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* as a regional system.

Thanks to the sponsorship of new translations, publications and institutions by the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngakwang Lobzang Gyatso (1617-1682) and his regent and political successor Sanggyé Gyatso (1653-1705) in Lhasa, the 17th century has become recognized as a “golden,” “classical” or even “early modern” period for Tibetan medicine.⁴ The impact of these medical projects beyond their time has often been taken for granted, however, with a straight line being drawn between the medical monastery at Chakpori (founded by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso in 1696 and known by its location, the “Iron Mountain” in Lhasa) and its successor institution the Mentsikhang or Institute of Medicine and Astrology founded in Lhasa under the Thirteenth Dalai Lama in 1916.⁵ In fact, the more than two hundred intervening years were characterized by significant developments and dissent in the field of medicine, deriving not least from the increasing flow of knowledge and trade along routes paved by the *pax Manjurica*. These developments, including a significant number of new Gelukpa medical colleges (*sman pa grwa tshang*) in Amdo, Mongolia, and Beijing, and the influential medical lineage of Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné (1700-1774) from Kham, have received comparatively little attention, at least within European-language scholarship.⁶ As Tashi Tsering notes in his introduction to the printed edition of *Music to Delight All the Sages*, it has also previously been

4 See Meyer 1992, Meyer 2003, Gyatso 2004, and Gyatso 2011.

5 As in Rechung 1973, one of the earliest and most influential European-language historical overviews of Tibetan medicine. Taube (1981, p.77) further argues, based on available sources, that the creative period of Tibetan medicine ended at the latest with the 17th century.

6 As Blezer, et. al. (2007) discuss, scholarly treatments of the history of Tibetan medicine remain few and far between. However, these authors do not include the period between the early 18th and early 20th centuries in their important compilation of *desiderata* in this field. Contemporary Tibetan and Mongolian authors, on the other hand, have paid significant attention to the 18-19th century spread and development of Tibetan medicine outside Central Tibet. These sources will be reviewed in my forthcoming dissertation. For brief but important discussions, see Meyer 1992, Gyatso 2004, and Chen Hua 2008. On the medical activities of Si tu paN chen, see Ehrhard 2000 and Garrett forthcoming.





difficult to determine which famous medical practitioners and new texts became familiar amongst all the far-flung Tibetan and neighboring areas at this time.⁷

Music to Delight All the Sages details a variety of medical teachings, practices, and new compositions in the Tibetan language that circulated widely during the 18th-19th centuries, within a network that connected Drakkar Taso Trulku's Himalayan border region in southwestern Tibet with Nepal, Bhutan, Central Tibet (*Dbus gtsang*), and regions further north and east. In the wake of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's project of cultural and political centralization, however – a project notable for its “controlled inclusiveness” – new articulations of productive dissent also emerged.⁸ While Drakkar Taso Trulku expresses admiration for these predecessors' achievements in the field of medicine and more broadly, he also questions Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's influential narrative of Tibetan medical history. Desi Sanggyé Gyatso had designed a Tibetan Buddhist medical synthesis based on the integration of the Nyingma (or Early Translation) tradition and its Great Perfection vehicle into his own Gelukpa tradition. Drakkar Taso Trulku proposes a synthesis based instead on the hermeneutics of the “Other-Emptiness” (*gzhan stong*) view, which will be discussed further below.

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU'S MEDICAL ACTIVITIES AND THE HERITAGE OF THE *GREAT VASE OF NECTAR*

Drakkar Taso Trulku Chökyi Wangchuk wrote substantially on medicine and its sister discipline of astrology (*rtsis*), but he is more widely known for mastering an eclectic range of Nyingma and Kagyü tradition teachings, as well as for his efforts to revitalize the religious and social life of southwestern Tibet. Drakkar Taso Trulku was born into the influential family lineage of a famous treasure-revealer from Kyirong, a district associated with the great saint Milarepa in the lower Mangyül area of Ngari bordering Nepal.⁹ He was recognized as the seventh throne-holder of the small monastery of Drakkar Taso by his great-uncle and primary teacher Rindzin [Karma] Trinlé Dūjom (1726-1789), and his candidacy was confirmed by the Thirteenth Karmapa Dūdül Dorjé (1733-1797).¹⁰ Drakkar

7 Tashi Tsering, Introduction in *Brag dkar ba* 2012, pp.xi-xii.

8 Dalton 2002, p.208.

9 Tashi Tsering, Introduction in *Brag dkar ba* 2012, pp.vi-vii.

10 *Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's* collected works will soon be published from a 10 volume manuscript in the collection of Slob dpon 'Gyur med at Nub ri Sa ma ga 'on monastery in Nepal. For a list of related biographical works within this *gsung 'bum* see Tashi Tsering, Introduction in *Brag dkar ba* 2012, pp.vii-viii. In this article I have relied upon the biographical summary of *Brag dkar rta so sprul sku* found in Ehrhard 2004 and related information in Ehrhard 2007 and 2008.



Taso Trulku's early experiences were shaped by the Sino-Nepalese War of 1788-1792, and he spent much of the rest of his life renovating temples and monasteries damaged in the war, managing publishing projects, writing and teaching. Drakkarwa's work to revitalize Kyirong and surrounding areas benefitted from his close ties to local rulers and families across southwestern Tibet, but also from farther afield, as indicated by a substantial donation he received from a Central Tibetan minister (*bka' blon*) and Qing amban conducting a regional inspection tour after the war's end.¹¹

Drakkar Taso Trulku cultivated an impressive network of relationships spanning the Tibetan cultural world, and in doing so received and redistributed a broad range of medical teachings and influences. Kyirong lay along a great route connecting Kathmandu and Lhasa, which served as a conduit for teachers and students, pilgrims and dignitaries, and not least of all smallpox epidemics. Drakkarwa himself travelled widely in southwestern and central Tibet as well as Nepal, seeking out rare texts and teachings along the way (such as the famous pharmacological work *Crystal Beads and Crystal Rosary* [*Shel gong shel 'phreng*] by Deumar Geshé Tendzin Puntsok (b. 1672) from Kham, who Drakkarwa considered one of the most influential medical scholars of the era). Drakkar Taso Trulku conducted correspondence with other medical practitioners, and medical students from as far as Mustang and Bhutan in turn came to visit in his home region.¹² According to the colophon, Drakkarwa wrote *Music to Delight the Sages* at the request of two of his close students and two other medical practitioners from Kyirong and the surrounding areas.¹³ Although there is no evidence of a xylographic edition, the author's autobiography indicates that his medical history also circulated well outside his home region. Around two years after its completion, Drakkar Taso Trulku met Zhapkar Tsokdruk Rangdröl (1781-1851), the lama of "great reputation" from northeastern Amdo (bordering China and Mongolia), who was traveling in Kyirong with his large entourage. Zhapkar received a reading authorization of *Music to Delight All the Sages* and is described as leaving Drakkarwa's company loaded with books.¹⁴

11 Ehrhard 2004, pp.93-94.

12 He addresses them variously as *tsho byed*, *sman pa grub chen*, and *gso rig 'dzin pa rnam*s. The letters are included in his collected works and provide fascinating sources for future study. See Tashi Tsering's Introduction to Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.ix-xi.

13 The requestors included Zhang po 'tsho mdzad rdo rje from Byams sprin in Skyid grong and La ldebs 'tsho byed tsho dbang dam chos, along with Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's students Tsho rig 'dzin pa blo gsal kar+ma phun tshogs and Shal smad rtsa phu ba rgyal po dar rgyas (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.106).

14 Ehrhard 2004, pp.101-102.



One of the most significant legacies from the Kyirong region that Drakkar Taso Trulku inherited was the medical treasure cycle *Great Vase of Nectar* (*'Chi med bdud rtsi bum pa* or *Gso byed bdud rtsi bum pa*). This cycle was discovered by the 11th century treasure-revealer Dorbum Chödrak, beneath a stone statue at the temple of Jamtrin in Kyirong.¹⁵ In the 16th century Drakkarwa's ancestor Rindzin Tennyi Lingpa discovered a treasure of his own at Jamtrin temple, and a century later Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu (1698-1755), the foremost teacher of Drakkar Taso Trulku's teachers, received a vision there as well, making it a site of ongoing importance in the region.¹⁶ It seems that Accomplishing Medicine (*sman sgrub*) ceremonies connected to the *Great Vase of Nectar* flourished especially in the Kyirong region between the 16th and 17th centuries, when they were performed by Chöwang Gyeltsen (1484-1549) at Kyirong Jamtrin temple, by the Third Yolmowa Trulku Tendzin Norbu (1598-1644) at Kyirong Pakpa temple, and by the treasure-finder Garwang Dorjé Nyingpo (1640-1685) in the nearby Kharbang valley of Ladep. Drakkar Taso Trulku and his teacher Mengom Chöjé (see below) carried on this legacy when they performed a large Accomplishing Medicine ceremony in 1804, resulting in the production and consecration of medicinal substances.¹⁷ According to Drakkarwa's autobiography, the significance of this event was comparable to the rituals of his three predecessors.

The *Great Vase of Nectar* and its supplementary works constitute both an important tantric cycle and a major medical corpus, covering topics related to diagnosis and practical therapies including intestinal disorders, children's illnesses and smallpox. Drakkar Taso Trulku wrote his own "daily practice" (*rgyun khyer*) text to accompany the *Great Vase of Nectar*, presumably in connection with a teaching on this body of work that he gave at Drotang in 1827 to a large group of students.¹⁸ Drakkar Taso Trulku also passed down a number of original medical compositions, on topics including eye surgery and treatments (*mig 'byed* and *mig bcos*), mercury purification and "extracting the essence" (*dngul 'gyogs 'dul gyi lag len* and *bcud len*), astrology (*rtsis*), and supplements for various tantric medical practices (*sman bla'i sgrub thabs*, *G.yu thog gsol 'debs*, etc.). He began writing *Music to Delight All the Sages* in 1816 and completed the medical history

15 For a history, outline and summary of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* (i.e., the *Great Vase of Nectar* and its supplementary works), see Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.177-189.

16 On Brag dkar ba's family connection to Byams sprin, see Ehrhard 2004, pp.103. On the vision received by KaH thog rig 'dzin here, see Ehrhard 2008, p.21 fn. 11.

17 Ehrhard 2004, p.96. On *sman sgrub* literature and practice, see Garrett 2009 and 2010.

18 Ehrhard 2004, p.104. Brag dkar ba's works related to *sman* and *rtsis* are listed in Tashi Tsering's Introduction to Brag dkar ba 2012, pp.ix-xi.





on the eighth day of the new Fire-Ox year (1817).¹⁹ Together, Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical activities, writings, and correspondence reveal his commitment to propagating the *Great Vase of Nectar* system as well as his openness to incorporating new practices and techniques. Within his medical history, Drakkar Taso Trulku addresses the tension inherent in reconciling these two goals.

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU AND THE LEGACY OF CHAKPORI

Despite the importance of the *Great Vase of Nectar* in Kyirong, it seems that this medical treasure cycle only attained wider repute after its 16th century systematization by Jangdak Tashi Topgyel (1550-1603), lineage-bearer of the Jang treasure tradition. Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's supplementary teachings on the *Great Vase of Nectar* are collectively known as the *Small Vase of Nectar of the Jang Treasure Heart Practice* (*Byang gter thugs sgrub kyi bdud rtsi bum chung*) or the *White, Blue and Yellow Scrolls of the Jang Treasure Heart Practice* (*Byang gter thugs sgrub kyi shog dril dkar sngo ser gsum*) – in short form, the *Small Vase of Nectar*. Jangdak Tashi Topgyel lived through a turbulent period, fleeing his home in Jang (western Tibet) to propagate the Jang treasure tradition teachings in Chonggyé (southeast of Lhasa). Under his successors, however, this tradition regained strength and built a new home at Dorjé Drak monastery with assistance from the Fifth Dalai Lama.²⁰ Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* redaction received considerable attention in both the record of the Fifth Dalai Lama's teachings received (*gsan yig*) and the 1703 medical history written by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.²¹ This brought the system greater renown in Central Tibet, but is also a source of ambivalence for Drakkar Taso Trulku.

In its title, *Music to Delight All the Sages* clearly references *A Feast to Delight the Sages* (*Dpal ldan gso ba rig pa'i khog 'bugs legs bshad bayDUrya'i me long drang srong dgyes pa'i dga' ston*, better known today by the short title *Beryl Mirror*), the medical history written by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso as a sort of charter for his new medical institution at Chakpori, and regarded by scholars today as a touchstone of the genre.²² Within *A Feast to Delight the Sages*, Sanggyé Gyatso explicitly sought to combine and codify an exhaustive catalog of prior Tibetan

19 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.106.

20 See Dalton 2002 (Chapter 4) for an important discussion of the Byang gter tradition and its relationship with the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Byang gter tradition should not be confused with the Byang lugs medical tradition; more will be said about this below.

21 Ehrhard 2008, pp.22, fn. 13.

22 On Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho's medical history see in particular Gyatso 2004 and 2011, and Schaeffer 2003. Gavin Kilty has recently rendered a great service by translating this quite lengthy work into English (Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010).





medical traditions. He presented himself as a successor of these, particularly the well-known Zur (*Zur lugs*) and Jang (*Byang lugs*) traditions that branched out during the 15th and 16th centuries, as well as the tradition of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* and other medical treasure texts. Although subsequent medical histories have largely considered the reconciliation of Jang and Zur schools as the basis for his synthesis of medicine, the regent uniquely devotes many pages to an outline and summary of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar*, creating a prominent section within his medical history devoted to this Kyirong and Jang treasure tradition. Through his great medical monastery at Chakpori, Desi Sanggyé Gyatso planned to propagate a new authoritative medical tradition based on his own commentaries of the *Four Tantras* (*Rgyud bzhi*, by this time widely considered the “root text” of Tibetan medicine): the *Blue Beryl* (*bayDUrya sngon po*) and *Additional Instructions* (*Man ngag lhan thabs*). According to Drakkar Taso Trulku, a century later Chakpori had indeed become famous and its tradition had “not diminished”; he refers to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso as a “great tradition helmsman” (*shing rta chen po*) of all the fields of knowledge and medicine in particular.²³

Drakkar Taso Trulku also offers deep respect to the Fifth Dalai Lama, hierarch of the Gelukpa tradition, praising in particular the “Great Fifth’s” close ties to the Nyingma or Early Transmission tradition: his Nyingma teachers, personal Nyingma practice, sponsorship of Nyingma monasteries and sponsorship of medical works. With evident admiration, Drakkarwa describes how the Fifth Dalai Lama’s journey to China and establishment of the patron-priest relationship with the Jamyang (Qing) emperor enabled the “white umbrella” of the Buddhist doctrine – and especially the Gelukpa teachings – to cover China, Tibet, and Mongolia, spreading all the fields of knowledge including medicine.²⁴ Medicine in this narrative is part of a larger Tibetan Buddhist knowledge system that, because of the Fifth Dalai Lama-Qing relationship, flourished beyond its cultural borders and connected disparate regions and peoples. Moreover, Drakkar Taso Trulku generously characterizes this project as an inclusive one, although it had proceeded on Gelukpa terms.

In his direct criticism of the ensuing 18th century period, however, the stakes of Drakkar Taso Trulku’s writing become apparent. Problematic undercurrents to the Fifth Dalai Lama’s Gelukpa-Nyingma reconciliation had surfaced soon after

23 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.81, 78.

24 Quoting *A Feast to Delight the Sages* on the regions covered by the Fifth Dalai Lama’s teachings (*rgya bod hor*), Brag dkar rta so sprul sku also adds the term *sog*. He also further stresses the Fifth Dalai Lama’s ties to the Rnying ma and chastises other authors for not fully understanding this relationship (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.76).





the hierarch's death, bringing a series of conflicts that led to the death of Sanggyé Gyatso, and to broad destruction for the Nyingma tradition. Although Polhané Sönam Topgyé (1689-1747), who came to power in Lhasa as a temporal ruler via his alliance with the Qing, made an effort once again to patronize Nyingma teachers such as the afore-mentioned Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu, tensions continued to simmer up until Drakkarwa's time. The Eighth Dalai Lama (1758-1804) notably did not mix Nyingma with Gelukpa personal practice in the eclectic tradition of his influential predecessor.²⁵ Drakkarwa bemoans "slander" that arose during this era from those "holding sectarian bias in their hearts, along with the perverse idea that the [Gelukpa] order was impure" because of the Fifth Dalai Lama's affinity for the Early Transmission teachings.²⁶ Moreover, despite his praise and defense of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's Nyingma alliances, it becomes clear during the course of *Music to Delight All the Sages* that Drakkar Taso Trulku has a somewhat different view of how Tibetan Buddhist and medical syncretism should proceed. It is not lost on Drakkarwa that the field of medicine – and the stunning symbolism of Sanggyé Gyatso's medical college atop the hill of Chakpori – provided a major source of legitimizing moral authority for the Gelukpa administration, tied to the incorporation of Nyingma practices such as the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* treasure tradition. In putting forth his own medical history to reclaim this regional tradition, Drakkarwa makes a rather defensive declaration (discussed in detail below) that the field of medicine is "only Nyingma."²⁷

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU'S TEACHERS OF MEDICINE

Drakkar Taso Trulku's interpretation of the history of medicine owes much to the influence of Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu, the influential master of both Nyingma and Karma Kagyü traditions who taught many of Drakkarwa's own teachers in Kyirong. Although he was not born until twenty years after Katok Rindzin's death, Drakkar Taso Trulku is perhaps best known today for his important biography of this well-connected polymath. Katok Rindzin's life story clearly provided a model for Drakkarwa: he was an eclectic scholar who wrote on topics ranging from Tibetan inscriptions to Chinese Buddhism, a sponsor of restoration work on ancient Buddhist sites in Nepal and Tibet, and a peripatetic

25 Maher 2005.

26 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.76.

27 *Gso ba rig pa 'di rnying ma kho na yin* (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.96). Recent text-critical studies have similarly recognized a deep connection between medical writing and Rnying ma literature (Gyatso 2004, Garrett 2010).





teacher who spent most of his life away from his home monastery of Katok in Kham.²⁸ As mentioned above, he also maintained a relationship with Polhané Sönam Topgyé and the Seventh Dalai Lama, and conducted diplomacy on behalf of the Lhasa government in Ladakh and throughout the same Himalayan region where Drakkar Taso Trulku was later active. One of Katok Rindzin's signature achievements, however, was to resuscitate Jonang tradition teachings that had suffered suppression during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Katok Rindzin does not seem to have written specifically on the subject of medicine (with the exception of one letter, found within his collected works, in answer to a question on Accomplishing Medicine), but he did write extensively on a closely related subject that was central to the Jonang tradition: the Kalachakra tantra and its system of astrology and astronomy (*skar rtsis*).²⁹ In *Music to Delight All the Sages*, however, it is Katok Rindzin's defense of the "Other-Emptiness" view of Middle Way doctrine (Madhyamaka), a position central to the Jonang tradition, that directly influences the historical argument.

Drakkar Taso Trulku began writing *Music to Delight All the Sages* at Mangyül Riwo Pembar, one of Jetsün Milarepa's meditation retreat sites high in the Himalayas and also the site of a reliquary for Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu. Before finishing the work some months later at his own monastery of Drakkar Taso, "the mendicant (*bya bral ba*) Chökyi Wangchuk" (as he signed himself) also made a pilgrimage to Central Tibet and during this time greatly diversified his medical training.³⁰ The pilgrimage began and ended at Ganden Puntsokling monastery, where he received teachings of the Jonang tradition. Drakkarwa also visited the Nyingma monastery of Mindröling near Lhasa, which had been founded by the Fifth Dalai Lama for his Nyingma teacher Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714). As we shall see, Terdak Lingpa is a second crucial source within Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical history.

The legacies of Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, Katok Rindzin, and Terdak Lingpa all manifest clearly within the eclectic range of medical teachings Drakkar Taso Trulku received in Kyirong and Central Tibet. In the earliest part of his

28 For more about the life and activities of KaH thog rig 'dzin, see Smith 2001, Ronis 2009 and Stearns 2010.

29 The most extensive edition of KaH thog rig 'dzin's *gsung 'bum*, in six volumes, was published by Damchoe Sangpo in Dalhousie, H.P., 1976-77. A comparison of the astrological works of KaH thog rig 'dzin and Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho would also be an interesting topic for future study.

30 According to Ehrhard, this pilgrimage took place between 1817-18 and after completion of the *khog 'bubs* (2004, p.100). The reference to Smin grol gling indicates, however, that at least this extant manuscript version was completed after Brag dkar ba's journey to Central Tibet.





life, Drakkarwa received various cycles of Nyingma teachings from his great-uncle Rindzin Trinlé Dūjom, who was a direct disciple of Katok Rindzin.³¹ These included the *Great Vase of Nectar* medical treasure cycle and Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's supplementary texts, which formed the basis of Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical practice.³² From Rindzin Trinlé Dūjom he also received the *Yutok Heart Essence* (*G.yu thog snying thig*) tantric practice attributed to the founder of Tibetan medicine Yutok Yönten Gönpö.

Drakkar Taso Trulku's second major teacher was Mengom Chöjé Kunga [Trinlé] Penden or Ananda Karma Shri (1735-1804), who was known as an exponent of the Barawa Kagyü and Nyingma traditions.³³ Drakkarwa's studies with this teacher also began during his childhood, and included many transmissions of the works of Katok Rindzin. From Mengom Chöjé, Drakkar Taso Trulku received teachings from the field of medicine such as the initiation (*rjes gnang*) of a practice of the Seven Medicine Buddhas (*Sman bla mched bdun*) and the oral transmission of a Medicine Buddha practice that Drakkarwa attributes to the Fifth Dalai Lama (*Mdo chog yid bzhin dbang rgyal*).³⁴ Drakkar Taso Trulku describes Mengom Chöjé as a "bearer of authentic practical instructions" who had memorized the first, second and last of the *Four Tantras* with the teacher Drangsong Könchok Chöpel.³⁵ According to a biography of Mengom Chöjé that Drakkarwa wrote in 1807, this teacher famously treated the Tenth Zhamarpa, as well as certain representatives of the Lhasa government and its major monasteries that had been taken hostage during the course of the Sino-Nepalese war.³⁶ But in *Music to Delight All the Sages* Mengom Chöjé is also credited with treating many people of high, low and middling status, and having many students. Besides performing the large Accomplishing Medicine ceremony with Drakkar Taso Trulku mentioned above, Mengom Chöjé wrote three medical practice texts that covered topics such as treating poison (*dug bcos*) and venereal disease (*reg dug gi bcos*).³⁷

In 1793, Drakkar Taso Trulku met his third major teacher, Tsewang Chimé Gönpö (1755-1807) of the Gur family lineage.³⁸ Tsewang Chimé Gönpö was

31 Ehrhard 2004, p.90.

32 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.90.

33 See Ehrhard 2007 for a detailed discussion of the biography of this figure.

34 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.90.

35 "Man ngag phyag bzhes tshul bzhin 'dzin pa po," Brag dkar ba 2012, p.88.

36 Ehrhard 2007, p.125-126.

37 A collection of Sman sgom chos rje's medical works, *Gso ba rig pa'i lag len gces rigs phyogs gcig tu sdebs pa gnad don gsal ba nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, has been published as volume 85 of the series *Smanrtsis shesrig spendzod*, Leh 1977.

38 Ehrhard 2004, p.93.





another disciple of Katok Rindzin. He carried on a branch tradition of the Drukpa Kagyü school known as the Dochen Kagyü, traced to the 13th century figure Madün Rechen or Madünpa who had meditated in Kyirong. Drakkarwa does not mention studying medicine with Tsewang Chimé Gönpo in his medical history, although elsewhere he states that this teacher had learned medicine and astrology himself, and that his uncle had attained fame in the field of medicine before passing away at age 47.³⁹ Besides teachings of the Dochen Kagyü, Drakkarwa received Mahamudra and Great Perfection (*Rdzogs chen*) instructions from Tsewang Chimé Gönpo. Great Perfection doctrine figures significantly within *Music to Delight All the Sages*, as will be discussed below.

Within his medical history, Drakkar Taso Trulku honors one other teacher particularly significant to his study of medicine. Drupwang [Kunpang] Namkha Samten (18-19th centuries) was a disciple of Mengom Chöjé and another practitioner of Great Perfection teachings who specialized in the field of medicine. Drakkarwa emphasizes Drupwang Namkha Samten's medical lineage, which is traced directly to Dar mo Menrampa Lobzang Chödrak (1638-1710).⁴⁰ Dar mo Menrampa was the main disciple of the Fifth Dalai Lama's teacher from the Zur medical tradition. Drakkar Taso Trulku also describes Dar mo Menrampa as one of Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's two primary medical teachers, along with Lhundingpa Namgyel Dorjé of the Jang medical tradition (although the regent himself downplayed these relationships in his medical history, presenting himself as self-taught).⁴¹ Over the 18th century, Dar mo Menrampa's texts, disciples and their disciples had spread widely within and beyond Tibet along with the medical texts attributed to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.⁴² Within the context of Drakkar Taso Trulku's

39 Ehrhard 2008, p.89, 84.

40 Brag dkar ba (2012, p.89) writes that Dar mo Sman rams pa's student Mer mo ba Blo gros [Blo bzang] chos 'phel in turn had Zhal ngo dar rgyas from Lho pha phrug as a student, whose medical teachings became a family lineage passed through his son to his grandson Sngags sman 'chang ba Zhal ngo lhun grub, teacher of Nam mkha' bsam gtan. Nam mkha' bstam gtan was from Pha phrug gi yul stod sgrags kyi grong stod, and was born into the Mes clan.

41 Meyer 2003, Brag dkar ba 2012, p.83.

42 The Fifth Dalai Lama appointed Dar mo Sman rams pa as teacher at Lha dbang ldog [mchog], a medical school at the Potala palace, and commissioned him to edit and complete the biographies of the Elder and Younger G.yu thog yon tan mgon po, as well as a major medical commentary of the Zur tradition, *Oral Transmission of the Ancestors (Mes po'i zhal lung)*. Dar mo sman rams pa's texts were consulted by Si tu paN chen and his lineage in Khams, and by Tibetan and Mongolian students from many of the A mdo medical colleges. Dar mo's student Be ri sman rams pa became the first teacher at the medical college of Gser khog btsan po dgon (Gdugs dkar 1990). Two more branches of Dar mo sman rams pa's lineage also appeared in A mdo Reb





writing, it is noteworthy that he traces this medical lineage not to Sanggyé Gyatso himself but to his important medical contemporary.

Drupwang Namkha Samten's own six-year medical training included study of the complete *Four Tantras, Additional Instructions* by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, *Ten Million Relics (Bye ba ring bsrel)* by Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé (progenitor of the Zur tradition, 1439-75), the *Yutok Heart Essence*, and certain practical instructions on body measurements (*lus thig gi man ngag phyag len*).⁴³ Drakkar Taso Trulku received empowerments from Drupwang Namkha Samten for the *Additional Instructions* and a brief version of the *Yutok Heart Essence*. Drakkarwa also mentions that in studying the *Four Tantras* with this teacher, they consulted Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's Potala edition for the first three sections, but the Jonang Puntsokling edition for the final section [*phyi ma rgyud*].⁴⁴ This Jonang print had likely been made available through the efforts of Katok Rindzin. In Mengom Chöjé's biography, one of Namkha Samten's medical treatments is compared to one from the great Jonang hierarch Tāranātha's teacher.⁴⁵ If Drupwang Namkha Samten's medical lineage had begun with close connections to the Gelukpa institution of Chakpori, it had drifted towards other influences over the next hundred years.

Finally, during his pilgrimage to Central Tibet, Drakkar Taso Trulku received the extended *Yutok Heart Essence* transmission and empowerment from the throne-holder of Mindrölling monastery, Pema Wanggyel (18th century).⁴⁶ The teachings of Terdak Lingpa, first master of this monastery and Nyingma tutor of the Fifth Dalai Lama, had disseminated in Kyirong since the teacher's own lifetime.⁴⁷ Terdak Lingpa had also transmitted the *Yutok Heart Essence* practice to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, meaning that Drakkar Taso Trulku shared his *Yutok Heart Essence* tradition with the founder of Chakpori.⁴⁸ By the time Drakkarwa visited Mindrölling around 1817, the Nyingma monastery had remained a center

gong (Rma lho khul tshan rtsal bcu'u dang Rma lho khul mang tshogs sgyu rtsal khang 2009).

43 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.89.

44 Brag dkar ba (2012) discusses printed editions of the *Four Tantras* and other medical texts on p.92.

45 Ehrhard 2007, p.123.

46 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.90.

47 Ehrhard 2008.

48 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.318. According to Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's biography, KaH thog rig 'dzin also studied with two sons of Gter bdag gling pa (Ronis 2009, p.93). Brag dkar rta so sprul sku calls one of these sons the manifestation (*rnam sprul*) of Vimalamitra, a figure considered central to both the Rnying ma and medical traditions (Garrett 2009). Gene Smith notes however that these names are difficult to identify with the known sons of Gter bdag gling pa [TBRC P676].





of *Yutok Heart Essence* practice for more than a century after the time of Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.

Drakkar Taso Trulku gives special emphasis in his medical history to the Zur tradition, giving us an idea of this tradition's fortunes after the time of Sanggyé Gyatso. In a list of several figures besides his own teachers whom he considers significant to the field of medicine, Drakkarwa links Zur contemporaries of Sanggyé Gyatso (including Darmo Menrampa, his teachers and others) to later figures such as Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné and Deumar Geshé Tendzin Puntsok from Kham.⁴⁹ During the course of his narrative Drakkar Taso Trulku also repeatedly defends the Zur tradition, and in particular the scholar and historian Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo (b. 1509), who had received harsh criticism from Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.

At the same time, Drakkar Taso Trulku conspicuously does not include any Jang medical tradition scholars or texts within his received lineages. He even rather summarily dismisses the two Jang medical transmissions of the *Four Tantras* presented by Desi Sanggyé Gyatso, calling them contradictory and ahistorical.⁵⁰ Sanggyé Gyatso had particularly identified with the Jang medical transmission that included the Tibetan king Muné Tsenpo, whom the regent counted as one of his previous incarnations.⁵¹ Drakkar Taso Trulku's rejection of this lineage can thus be taken as a particularly stark rebuttal of Sanggyé Gyatso's legacy reconciling the Zur and Jang medical traditions. The reason for this rejection is less clear, and is surprising in light of the close relationship of the Jang medical tradition to the Jonang tradition. But in fact, both the Jang medical and Jang treasure traditions (portrayed as entirely separate in both Sanggyé Gyatso's and

49 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.78-88. Brag dkar ba provides a short biography of Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho himself, as well as details regarding his students. Besides the well-known Chags pa chos 'phel, he mentions A bo sman blo don grub and Mkhas grub ratna bha dra/Rin chen bzang po, as well as the latter's student 'Tsho byed 'phrin las rab rgyas. The figures that Brag dkar ba connects directly and indirectly to the Zur lugs also include Byang ngos Bstan 'dzin rgyal po, Byang ngos Nang so dar rgyas, Rnam gling paN chen Dkon mchog chos grags, Bod mkhas pa Mi pham dge legs rnam rgyal, Shrl mda' pa gzhan phan rgya mtsho (another of Katok Rindzin's collaborators) and Sde pa tshe brtan lha skyabs.

50 *Rgyud srol gnyis ka go rim mi mthun par ma zad lo rgyus rnam dang yang 'gal bas 'thad par ma mthong* (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.91).

51 In the unique Byang *bka' ma* lineage the *Four Tantras* are never hidden or rediscovered as a treasure text. Instead they pass through direct and unbroken oral transmission from two Indian masters to Padmasambhava to the Tibetan prince Mu ne btsan po (8th century) and down through later Byang lugs figures (Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.291). Both Byang lugs historians and Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho use this lineage to assert exceptional legitimacy for their medical tradition.





Drakkar Taso Trulku's accounts) originate in the Jang Ngamring area and have ties to the Jonang tradition.⁵² Moreover, since the circumstances surrounding the rise in repute of Jangdak Tashi Topgyel's *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* roughly coincide with the waning of the Jang medical tradition, there may be some further connection with the regent's later appropriation (and possible reworking) of these traditions within *A Feast to Delight the Sages*. A comparison of these traditions and their histories begs further research.

Through his account of his medical teachers and lineages, Drakkar Taso Trulku illustrates some relationship to the legacy of Chakpori, but also the increasing distance between this institution and its own inclusive (or appropriating) roots. This distance seems to have widened especially during the late 18th century, as illustrated in the description of 'precious pills' (*rin chen ril bu*) within *Music to Delight All the Sages* (the only extended description of a specific medicine). Drakkar Taso Trulku recounts how the notoriously laborious, arcane and expensive production of precious pills, once associated with the Karmapa and Zhamarpa incarnation lineages of the Kagyü tradition and particularly with Yargyappa, Drigung and Tsechen monasteries, came to be practiced in 1783 by the Ganden Tripa in Lhasa, head of the Gelukpa tradition.⁵³ Although he writes of this event with some admiration, the gold, silver and other precious ingredients collected for the pills clearly represent a transfer of great wealth and the prestige deriving from the author's medical tradition to a government that did not continue the Fifth Dalai Lama's support for ecumenicalism at that time.

It is therefore especially significant that Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical network existed largely outside of large monastic institutions. Drakkarwa levels criticism against those "haughty people puffed up with pride" who brag about secret instructions or are "so intent on becoming great court physicians (*bla sman*) of higher and higher levels that they despise the protectorless poor and humble types, seeing them like leper corpses."⁵⁴ This description sounds suspiciously akin to the degree-granting system of Chakpori and other Gelukpa medical colleges of the period. By the early 19th century Chakpori had produced court physicians for emperors, princes and great lamas, and its medical degree (*sman rams pa*)

52 In addition to the Byang lugs physician Lhun sdings Bdud rtsi 'gyur med who was court physician to the Jonang hierarch Tāranātha, there are many other connections between the Byang medical and Jonang traditions (Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.289 and *passim*); the Byang gter tradition is tied to the Jonang through Byang bdag Bkra shis stobs rgyal's Jonang teacher Rje btsun Grol mchog (Dalton 2002, p.193).

53 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.93-94. Yar rgyab pa monastery is where Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po printed the Grwa thang edition of the *Four Tantras*.

54 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.98.





system had been replicated within subsequent Gelukpa medical colleges.⁵⁵ While medical history authors from earlier periods had articulated a tension between textual scholars of medicine and those who prioritized experiential learning from the instruction of teachers, Drakkar Taso Trulku – who sought both types of training – alludes to a further tension ensuing from the attempted systematization of medical learning by the highly institutionalized Gelukpa tradition.⁵⁶ This tension is negotiated within *Music to Delight All the Sages* during the course of Drakkarwa’s argument regarding the origin of the *Four Tantras*.

DRAKKAR TASO TRULKU AND THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA DEBATE

The question of the origin and authority of Tibetan medical teachings, and in particular whether and how the *Four Tantras* derived from the word of the Buddha (*bka'*), shapes the structure of all Tibetan works of medical history. Several recent studies have examined the nature of this debate and how it developed, mainly from the earliest available works (12-13th century) through Desi Sanggyé Gyatso’s *A Feast to Delight the Sages*.⁵⁷ Tibetan canonical literature distinguishes between Buddha-word (*sutra*) and the treatises of later Indian and Tibetan authors (*śāstra*), but because the *Four Tantras* are not included in the canon, medical history authors have almost always appealed instead to what Janet Gyatso has called the “logic of legitimation” of the treasure tradition.⁵⁸ Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo, Desi Sanggyé Gyatso and Drakkar Taso Trulku appeal to this logic in various ways, constructing “elaborate conceptions of lineage” that all seem to conceal evidence of Tibetan authorship and attribute the *Four Tantras* as the subsequently revealed but ultimate word of the Buddha.⁵⁹ The difference between these authors, it seems, is a matter of emphasis and devilish detail. Later scholars have noted Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo’s rationalization of the *Four Tantras* as a Tibetan-authored *śāstra*, vis-à-vis Sanggyé Gyatso’s insistence in arguing for the text essentially as Buddha-word despite his acceptance of many arguments regarding its Tibetan character.⁶⁰ Just as Desi Sanggyé Gyatso both criticized Zurkhar and incorporated this predecessor’s historical

55 Including, but not limited to, the medical colleges of Sku ’bum and Bla brang bkra shis ’khyil monasteries (Gdugs dkar 1990).

56 Schaeffer 2003, Gyatso 2004.

57 Karmay 1998, Schaeffer 2003, Gyatso 2004 & 2011, Czaja 2005-06a & 2005-06b, Garrett 2006 & 2007, Martin 2007, and Yangga 2010.

58 Gyatso 1993.

59 Gyatso 2004, p.91.

60 See Gyatso 2004 and Yangga 2010 for a fuller discussion of Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po’s position, which he stated more and less obliquely over the course of his works. C.f. Czaja 2005-2006a.



evidence into his own argument, Drakkar Taso Trulku quotes long passages from Sanggyé Gyatso's text and compares it to "the sun and the moon," before eventually faulting it for confusion and omissions in need of correction.⁶¹ *Music to Delight All the Sages* ultimately defends the contentious position that medicine is "only Nyingma," presenting a new and unique "extraordinary lineage" (*thun mong ma yin pa'i rgyud pa*) as the basis of the case.⁶² Not only does Drakkarwa cite Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu on the history of this transmission, he also admits "daring to add" some of his own remarks.⁶³

In fact Drakkar Taso Trulku presents two transmissions of the *Four Tantras* as authoritative. Although they differ, both classify the text as an 8th century revealed treasure ultimately attributable to the Medicine Buddha. The first is Drakkarwa's Canonical Transmission (*bka' ma*) lineage, which is based in the Zur tradition and emphasizes early Indian roots. This lineage is based on Terdak Lingpa's record of received teachings (*gsan yig*), which Desi Sanggyé Gyatso also used as his source for listing the Zur lineage.⁶⁴ It is the second "extraordinary lineage" that Drakkar Taso Trulku uses to build his case for the Nyingma character of medicine, however. This lineage hinges on none other than Padmasambhava (8th century), the tantric adept credited with the Early Transmission conversion of Tibet to Buddhism during the imperial period. Citing Katok Rindzin's biography of Padmasambhava, Drakkar Taso Trulku argues that the *Four Tantras* were requested by the Tibetan king Tri Songdeutsen (8th century) at Samyé monastery, which was like an emanation of the medical city Tanaduk, and that Padmasambhava taught the text in the form of the Medicine Buddha.⁶⁵ Since this lineage does not include any Indian adepts prior to Padmasambhava, it

61 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.105-6.

62 See fn. 27.

63 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.105-6.

64 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.316-318. Brag dkar ba makes clear that *bka' ma* here alludes to the Nyingma tantric classification of canonical teachings rather than to a continuous "oral" transmission. Brag dkar rta so sprul sku's full *bka' ma* lineage is given as: *Sangs rgyas sman bla/ rig pa'i ye shes lnga/ yid las skyes/ 'tsho byed gzhon nu/ mgon po klu sgrub/ dpal ldan dpa' bo/ kha che zla dga' / lo chen bai ro/ chos rgyal khri srong/ grwa pa mngon shes/ dbus pa dar grags/ rog ston dkon mchog skyabs/ g.yu thog pa chen po nas rim par brgyud cing/* (2012, p.90). He does not follow the lineage past G.yu thog.

65 Brag dkar rta so sprul sku actually repeats this KaH thog rig 'dzin quotation from a work by Sman sgom chos rje (2012, p.29-31). Brag dkar ba lists his "extraordinary lineage" as follows: *Sangs rgyas sman bla/ slob dpon sangs rgyas gnyis pa/ lo chen bai ro/ mnga' bdag khri srong/ grwa pa mngon shes nas g.yu thog pa rje btsun gu Na nA tha/ des sum ston ye shes gzungs nas rim par brgyud pa'o/* (Brag dkar ba 2012, p.91).



deemphasizes Indian influence on the *Four Tantras*. Furthermore, Drakkar Taso Trulku claims that Padmasambhava actually taught various medical methods according to the necessities of taming each place in Tibet where he travelled to spread Buddhism. These methods eventually appeared in the *Four Tantras* and other medical treasure texts, and later Yutok Yönten Gönpo gathered these methods as additions (*kha skong*) within his redaction of the *Four Tantras*. In doing so, Drakkarwa writes, Yutok is “undifferentiated from the Medicine Buddha and from Padmasambhava.”⁶⁶ Drakkar Taso Trulku contends that at the time of treasure-revealer Drapa Ngonshé it was not suitable to say the *Four Tantras* was a treasure of Padmasambhava, so it falsely became known as the composition of Yutok Yönten Gönpo.⁶⁷ Distancing himself from Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo’s attribution of Tibetan authorship, Drakkar Taso Trulku thus finds his own solution to the problem of the *Four Tantras*’ Tibetan characteristics.

The figure of Padmasambhava serves within *Music to Delight All the Sages* to legitimize not just the *Four Treasures* as both Buddha-word and treasure text, but also the author’s own medical treasure text tradition, the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar*. Drakkar Taso Trulku points to specific content from the *Four Tantras*, including healing mantras (*sngags*) to protect from poison and infectious diseases (*nad rims*), mantras for the practice of ‘essence extraction’ (*bcud len*), and the Nectar of Immortality “dharma medicine” (*Bdud rtsi a mrl ta chos sman*) as examples of the kinds of medical practices that count as “only Nyingma.”⁶⁸ He declares that these “antidotes for all the illnesses that quickly rob the life of beings in these degenerate times” originate within medical treasure texts such as the *Great Vase of Nectar* and its Jang treasure tradition supplements, as well as many instructional texts (*man ngag*) such as the *Ten Million Relics* “text from experience” (*nyams yig*) of the Zur tradition.⁶⁹ Not only the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* corpus, but also a range of old and new medical practices are therefore legitimized within the rubric of treasure literature and its “instructions.”

66 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.43-5. Attributing the *Four Tantras*’ authorship to Padmasambhava is not a new development among Tibetan medical histories. Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po also mentions scholars taking this approach (Yangga 2010, p.10).

67 On the issue of the Elder and Younger G.yu thog yon tan mgon po (see Yangga 2010), Brag dkar rta so sprul sku closely follows Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho’s presentation, which is in turn based on the biographies edited by Dar mo sman rams pa. Neither Brag dkar rta so sprul sku nor Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho includes the Elder G.yu thog as a main figure within the *Four Tantras*’ transmission.

68 According to Brag dkar ba (2012, p.95), these mantras and medicines are found within the *Man ngag rgyud* chapter 87 and *Phyi ma rgyud* chapter 26. For a discussion of *bcud len*, see Barbara Gerke’s forthcoming work.

69 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.95-96.





Despite his polemic that the field of medicine is “only Nyingma,” Drakkar Taso Trulku does seek to reconcile the medical with other traditions. He begins with a claim attributed to Desi Sanggyé Gyatso that if classified according to the treasure system, the *Four Tantras* are the type of ancillary practice (*cha lag nyams len*) known as Heart Essence (*snying thig*), and therefore “nothing other than Great Perfection,” the most complete of all teachings.⁷⁰ Great Perfection teachings, while most strongly associated with the Nyingma and Bön traditions, had also been practiced in the Kagyü tradition since the 12th century and championed along with medicine by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Drakkar Taso Trulku’s appeal to Great Perfection doctrine not only bridges his Nyingma and Kagyü lineages, he also takes it further, equating Great Perfection teachings with the Jonang “Other-Emptiness” view re-popularized by Katok Rindzin.⁷¹

According to Drakkar Taso Trulku, the “calamity of bickering” between the views of “Self-Emptiness” (*rang stong*, associated with the Gelukpa) and “Other-Emptiness” (associated, at times, with all non-Gelukpa traditions) has obstructed the ultimate essence (*don gyi ngo bo*) of the Middle Way teachings in the Snowland.⁷² In order to harmonize with temporary circumstances, he contends, the Middle Way teachings of the “Other-Emptiness” view may be considered in accordance with Early Transmission Great Perfection practice. He then cites an unimpeachable Gelukpa authority – Kedrup Jé, disciple of the tradition’s progenitor Tsongkhapa – to further argue that the views of Great Perfection and Middle Way practice are “almost without difference.”⁷³ To his own mind, any contradictions between the “Other-Emptiness” view and Great Perfection teachings (and perhaps by extension the “Other-Emptiness” and “Self-Emptiness” views, and the Gelukpa and non-Gelukpa traditions) are thus effectively resolved. In turn, resolving these hermeneutical contradictions allows Drakkar Taso Trulku to integrate all the medical teachings from his various sources and lineages without incongruity, including the Potala and Jonang Puntsokling prints of the *Four Tantras*, many practical instructions passed on from individual teachers or associated with the Zur tradition, the *Crystal Beads* and *Crystal Rosary*, the *Yutok Heart Essence*, and the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar*, as well as a long list of other medical treasure texts cited by both Drakkarwa and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso.⁷⁴

70 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.94.

71 Dge rtse paN chen ’Gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub (1761-1829), an influential figure at KaH thog monastery in his own time, takes a similar position in his defense of *gzhan stong* (Ronis p.236, n. 432).

72 Brag dkar ba 2012, p.95.

73 Ibid.

74 Medical *gter ma* are discussed in Brag dkar ba 2012, p.34-36. See Garrett 2009 and 2010 on related Rnying ma tantric and medical literature.





TIBETAN MEDICINE, INSTITUTIONALIZATION,
AND INNOVATION ON THE MARGINS

Music to Delight All the Sages is a work of significance for understanding the legacy of perhaps the most pivotal point in the history of Tibetan medicine, under the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso. The connection Drakkar Taso Trulku draws between the field of medicine and the Great Perfection tradition sheds light on the significance of medical activity for these Gelukpa leaders beyond the obvious potential of medicine as a resource for moral legitimacy. We are obliquely reminded that medicine is one of two noted specialties of the Nyingma Great Perfection tradition – along with the highly controversial practice of tantric war magic, which the Fifth Dalai Lama had ambivalently assented to during the Mongol campaign to depose the rulers of Tsang and their Kagyüpa, Bönpo and Jonangpa allies.⁷⁵ Indeed this latter association could be considered the key context for Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's urgent praise of Great Perfection practices within *A Feast to Delight the Sages*, which imposes on the text a convoluted organization and a long exegesis reconciling Pratimokṣa, Bodhisattva, and Vidyādhara tantric vows that otherwise makes little sense to include within a medical history. Discussing his own life during the course of the text, the regent takes pains to describe his personal practice of the tantric vows, explaining that although “I had a great liking for the *pratimokṣa* vows, ... they did not come my way,” and making the extraordinary statement that although “I have maintained the bodhicitta dedication, keeping my vow of not taking the life of a human except when powerless to do otherwise, ... in order to maintain the rule of law when governing the country, I have come close to harming the mind of compassion, but it is difficult to be of help in every case.”⁷⁶ Later, however, after describing his medical activities to benefit his subjects, Desi Sanggyé Gyatso is able to conclude the main body of his text with the words, “In this way I think I have followed the great waves of bodhisattva conduct.”⁷⁷ The placement of Sanggyé Gyatso's new medical monastery at Chakpori, which on its hilltop perch opposite the Dalai Lama's palace became a focal point of the city of Lhasa, serves as a strong indication of the importance to the regent of legitimizing both his government and his reliance on the Great Perfection tradition.

Throughout *Music to Delight All the Sages*, Drakkar Taso Trulku wrestles with the particular legacy of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Desi Sanggyé Gyatso's political, doctrinal, and medical syncretism. Despite the regent's incorporation of the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* cycle and other Great Perfection

75 See Dalton 2011, pp.136-143.

76 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.332.

77 Desi Sangye Gyatso and Kilty 2010, p.489.





traditions into his charter for Chakpori, Drakkarwa and his teachers had remained outside the orbit of this Gelukpa institution. Drawing on Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu's critique of 18th century Gelukpa sectarianism based on the Jonang "Other-Emptiness" view, and foreshadowing similar arguments among the well-known latter-19th century "nonsectarian" (*ris med*) movement, Drakkar Taso Trulku's medical history reconciles his various medical lineages and provides a historical and hermeneutical rationale for reclaiming the *Great Vase and Small Vase of Nectar* as a regional medical system. His argument links the origin of the *Four Tantras* with the Early Transmission of Buddhism in Tibet, therefore more closely associating the field of medicine in general with his teachers' Nyingma and Kagyü traditions. Drakkarwa's medical activities, along with those of his teachers and students, also provide a notable example of innovation on the margins of the Tibetan world, outside (but not entirely disconnected from) the powerful Gelukpa institutional network that benefitted considerably during this time from its ties to the Mongols and to the Qing empire.

In fact, the pattern of Tibetan knowledge circulation that emerges in Drakkarwa's historical account is one of innovation repeatedly spreading from the margins to centers, as larger institutions coaxed eremitic teachers to teach monastic students, or acquired rare manuscripts and republished them as xylographic prints. As an institution-builder himself, Drakkar Taso Trulku carried medical knowledge and practice forward with the specific goal to heal, influence, and bind together the western Tibetan regions injured in the Sino-Nepalese war. The productive tension evident in his writing points toward the vitality of Tibetan medicine at this moment preceding the global "rise of science," its flexibility to negotiate new theories and practices, and the confidence of its practitioners regarding their influence within regional networks of knowledge circulation.





GLOSSARY OF TIBETAN TERMS

| THL phonetics | Wylie transliteration |
|--|--|
| Amdo | A mdo |
| Bön | Bon |
| Chakpori | Lcags po ri |
| Chonggyé | 'Phyong rgyas |
| Chöwang Gyeltsen | Chos dbang rgyal mtshan |
| Darmo Menrampa Lobzang Chödrak | Dar mo sman rams pa Blo bzang chos grags |
| Desi Sanggyé Gyatso | Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho |
| Deumar Geshé Tendzin Puntsok | De'u dmar dge bshes bstan 'dzin phun tshogs |
| Dorbum Chödrak | Rdor 'bum chos grags |
| Dorjé Drak | Rdo rje brag |
| Drakkar Taso Trulku [or Drakkarwa] Chökyi Wangchuk | Brag dkar rta so sprul sku [Brag dkar ba] Chos kyi dbang phyug |
| Drangsong Könchok Chöpel | Drang srong Dkon mchog chos 'phel |
| Drapa Ngonshé | Grwa pa mngon shes |
| Drigung | 'Bri khung [gung] |
| Drotang | Gro thang |
| Drupwang [Kunpang] Namkha Samten | Grub dbang [Kun spangs] Nam mkha' bsam gtan |
| Ganden Puntsokling | Dga' ldan phun tshogs gling |
| Ganden Tripa | Dga' ldan khri pa |
| Garwang Dorjé Nyingpo | Gar dbang rdo rje snying po |
| Gelukpa | Dge lugs pa |
| Gur | Gur |
| Jamtrin | Byams sprin |
| Jamyang | 'Jam dbyangs |
| Jangdak Tashi Topgyel | Byang bdag Bkra shis stobs rgyal |
| Jonang | Jo nang |
| Kagyü [Karma, Barawa, Drukpa, Dochen] | Bka' brgyud [Kar+ma, 'Ba' ra ba, 'Brug pa, Mdo chen] |
| Karmapa Dödül Dorjé | Kar+ma pa Bdud 'dul rdo rje |
| Katok Rindzin Tsewang Norbu | KaH thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu |
| Kedrup Jé | Mkhas grub rje |
| Kham | Khams |
| Kharbang | Mkhar bang |
| Kyirong | Skyid grong |
| Ladep | La ldebs |
| Lhundingpa Namgyel Dorjé | Lhun sdings pa Rnam rgyal rdo rje |
| Madün Rechen / Madünpa | Ma bdun ras chen / Ma bdun pa |





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| Mangyül | Mang yul |
| Mengom Chöjé Kunga [Trinlé] Penden | Sman sgom chos rje Kun dga' ['phrin las] dpal ldan |
| Mentsikhang | Sman rtsis khang |
| [Jetsün] Milarepa | [Rje btsun] Mi la ras pa |
| Mindrölling | Smin grol gling |
| Muné Tsenpo | Mu ne btsan po |
| Ngakwang Lobzang Gyatso [Fifth Dalai Lama] | Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho |
| Ngamring | Ngam ring |
| Ngari | Mnga' ris |
| Nyingma | Rnying ma |
| Pakpa | 'Phags pa |
| Pema Wanggyel | Pad+ma dbang rgyal |
| Polhané Sönam Topgyé | Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas |
| Rindzin Tennyi Lingpa | Rig 'dzin Bstan gnyis gling pa |
| Rindzin [Karma] Trinlé Düjom | Rig 'dzin [Kar+ma] 'phrin las bdud 'joms |
| Riwo Pembar | Ri bo dpal 'bar |
| Samyé | Bsam yas |
| Situ Panchen Chökyi Jungné | Si tu paN chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas |
| Tanaduk | Lta na sdug |
| Terdak Lingpa | Gter bdag gling pa |
| Tri Songdeutsen | Khri Srong de'u btsan |
| Tsechen | Rtse chen |
| Tsewang Chimé Gönpo | Tshe dbang 'chi med mgon po |
| Tsongkhapa | Tsong kha pa |
| Yargyappa | Yar rgyab pa |
| Yolmowa Trulku Tendzin Norbu | Yol mo ba sprul sku Bstan 'dzin nor bu |
| Yutok Yönten Gönpo | G.yu thog yon tan mgon po |
| Zhamarpa | Zhwa dmar pa |
| Zhapkar Tsokdruk Rangdröl | Zhabs dkar Tshogs drug rang grol |
| Zurkhar Lodrö Gyelpo | Zur mkhar Blo gros rgyal po |
| Zurkhar Nyamnyi Dorjé | Zur mkhar Mnyam nyid rdo rje |

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